

# Having Nothing, Yet Having Everything

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[ 0 : 00 ] We're going to turn now to 2 Corinthians and chapter 6, and we're going to look at verses 9 and 10.

2 Corinthians chapter 6 and verses 9 and 10. We looked at some of the verses before that a couple of weeks ago, but verse 9, we finished off looking at the beginning of that a couple of weeks ago. As unknown and yet well known, as dying and behold we live, as punished and yet not killed, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing everything.

Now Paul has been setting out before the church in Corinth the fact that ministering to them has not been easy.

Paul, as we know, had to endure many hardships for the gospel, and he found ministering to the church in Corinth particularly difficult.

[ 1 : 25 ] And sadly, the church in Corinth didn't appreciate all that the apostle Paul did for them.

In fact, it's very obvious that they were very critical of Paul in many instances. And that must have been kind of a heartbreak to Paul, who was giving us everything for their sakes.

And yet they weren't in return, giving back, as it were, to him. And it's no doubt but that they brought sorrow into his heart.

Yet the wonderful thing about the apostle Paul is that he was always rejoicing in the Lord Jesus Christ. And he really became poor for them just in the same way, well, not in the same way, but we know that Christ became poor for us in order that we might be rich.

But there was a sense in which the apostle Paul was putting himself out all the time for their benefit in order that they might be enriched.

[ 2 : 30 ] Now, we looked at these verses last week from, I think, from verse 3 through to the very beginning of verse 9.

But picking up here tonight where it says, as dying and yet we live. And that is such a truth spiritually, because this little section that we have here is full of paradoxes.

They're kind of opposites. And yet that is true all the way through our Christian life. There are so many opposites at work within our life. Because on the one hand, it is absolutely true that we're dying.

And yet on the other hand, we are also living. We live. And we know that this dying involves dying to self, dying to all the lusts that are part and partial of our life, dying to the world.

And these, as we know, are very difficult things. Death is the most painful thing in this world. And that is why, as Christians, we find the dying that is taking part within our own life to be so painful and so difficult.

[ 3 : 48 ] Because putting to death, we are putting to death the things that are natural to us.

Because the world, the flesh, and of course all the assaults of the devil, all that is part and partial of our fallen human nature.

And it's where we are without Christ. So when Christ comes into our life and into our heart, there is this new life. But there is also all the old.

But the wonderful thing is that Christ has broken the power of sin within our life. And while sin, as has been so often said, while sin continues to rage within our heart, it doesn't reign.

It is no longer king on the throne of our heart. It causes havoc and distress. And it puts us wrong so much of the time.

But Christ is now king of our heart. And we're told that sin shall no more have dominion over us. And we are dying to sin.

[ 4 : 55 ] And the funny thing is that it will often appear that it's a very reverse. And, you know, very often the further you go on in the Christian life, the less it appears to you that you're actually dying to sin.

And maybe that's how you feel tonight. And you say to yourself, you know, as the years have gone on, I feel that my battles with sin, yes, they're as few as ever they were.

But I seem to discover that sin has a hold on me, that sin is greater within me than I think it ever was before. And so often you look at yourself and you say, you know, I'm far, far worse than I was when I started out.

That is often the nature of how it is, because the more that the Holy Spirit reveals to us off our shelf, the more that we see just how helpless and hopeless we are with regard to our sin.

However, having said all that, that we are dying to sin, we are also living. We have become living creatures, living people.

[ 6 : 00 ] We are alive to God. Jesus Christ, do you remember how he said that he was, that he is the resurrection and the life. And that resurrected life has now become part and partial of our life as well.

We don't, we are dying to any hope that we have within ourselves, but we are living in our hope in Jesus Christ. We are dying to just so many areas and aspects of this world.

But our whole life now is caught up in the Lord Jesus Christ. And not only have we been given spiritual life in Jesus Christ, but for the Christian, we actually realise that in Christ, this is life.

That, as the psalmist said, sin's better is thy love than life. And the Christian comes on to a plane or into a place where you discover that there is no life outside Christ.

That you would hate in any shape or form to go back to living as you once did. Even although there are times in your Christian life you say to yourself, you know, I don't know if there's any difference in me from what I used to be.

[ 7 : 22 ] I don't know if I'm, I sometimes fear and feel that I'm just like what I always was. But no, you're not. Because if just supposing you could be taken, supposing it was possible to be taken out of Christ and placed back where you were, you would say to yourself, oh no, this is terrible.

I need to get back. But of course, it's only grace that can make you do that, make you want to go back. So there's this new life that is within us. And this is our life now.

We don't want any other life. And all our life is lived in Christ and for Christ. That is our great day.

That's what a Christian does in the morning. When you get up in the morning, you ask the Lord to help you to live in him and to rejoice in him and all these things every day. But you ask that his life would become more and more powerful in your experience every single day.

And then it goes on to say here that we are punished and yet not killed. Now, Paul was often punished by the authorities for preaching the gospel, just in the same way as Peter and John, they were often punished.

[ 8 : 48 ] And yet the apostle wasn't killed, although there came a time when we believe he was killed for his faith. And again, we don't understand the way that these things work and why God permits and allows that.

But that was to be Paul's end. And he writes from the prison in 2 Timothy telling us that his end is near.

And of course, in many ways, it's gone full circle for the apostle then because he himself had been on the other side of the fence once and had been party to the first martyr ever.

And he was so pleased when Stephen was stunned to death and he was looking after the clothes of the stunner. And Paul was in full sympathy with what they were doing.

But of course, it went full circle. And Paul now was the one who was to be executed for the faith.

But at this particular point, that's not where he is.

[ 9 : 51 ] But on many occasions, Paul was punished for his faith. And he wasn't, of course, it wasn't by God. He was punished by this world.

He was punished by the authorities that are ruled by darkness, that hate God. And they hate Paul because he is an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the thing is that many Christians are still to this day punished by the state and by others because of their love for the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, the actual word here that is used for punishing is to inflict pain and not necessarily to make a person better for it.

You know, sometimes we can, if we're talking about in the form of chastisement, pain can be inflicted, but it is with the aim of making one better. But that's not what's being talked about here. This is punishment. Now, what we've got to remember is that God never, ever punishes his children as such.

[11:06] Yes, God's people are punished by others, but they won't be punished by God. Because, you see, to punish is to satisfy justice.

We talk about crime and punishment. There's the crime and there's the punishment that is in measure to the crime. So that punishment is there to satisfy justice.

So that is why God will never punish his children. Because he has already punished his son and justice has been satisfied.

So because God is just and right, he will never do that twice. So God's children will never be punished in order that justice will be satisfied.

Because justice has been satisfied in Jesus Christ. But God often chastises his people. And that's a different thing. And the chastisement is always with the aim of making his people better Christians.

[12:09] And it is in order to break so many of the lusts and the forces and powers that are within us. But we mustn't think that every moment that we suffer anything.

That God is at that particular moment that he's working, that we say, oh, this is God out with his rod. It's not always the case. Sometimes God does different things with us.

And we mustn't just assume that every difficulty or pain or trouble or whatever that comes into our life is God chastising us.

God, for his own purposes and for his own glory, will sometimes allow things to happen in the life of the Christian in order that the grace of God and the power of God and the glory of God will be seen in people's lives.

You see, when you think of, say, for instance, Paul and Silas in the prison in Philippi. Although they suffered terribly, they were praising and glorifying God.

[13:22] And of course, the earthquake came and their witness, their bearing witness to God and glorifying God had such an impact upon the Philippian jailer that he asks, what must I do in order to be saved?

So sometimes that's the way that God is working. So while a lot of the time it is in order that he will deal with the pride and with just so much that is wrong within us and teaching us and moulding us more and more to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, sometimes his heavy hand upon us is in order that we will display his glory and to display his grace within our lives.

And of course, that's how it was in Paul's life. Many, many of the things that came by in Paul's life and through his life, he displayed great glory to the, gave great glory to the Lord.

And then it says, a sorrowful yet always rejoicing. Now, as we know, Jesus Christ was a man of sorrows and he was acquainted with grief. And if we follow the Lord Jesus Christ, of course, we will never have the sorrows that he's had.

And we will never follow down exactly the same road as he did because he, as our sin bearer, went on a path that nobody, as it says, he trod the winepress alone.

[14:56] Nobody will follow him in that direction. But just in the same way as Jesus was a person of sorrows, so we will also be people of sorrows.

And as we follow Jesus in this world, just as the world hated Jesus, the world will often hate God's people for no reason at all.

So I knew a person that he said to me, this is a lot later in life. And he became a Christian. And one of the things that really, really he found hard to cope with as a Christian was his treatment of Christians before he was converted.

He absolutely hated Christians. And he was thinking of one or two people at work and he made their life absolutely necessary. He did everything he could to hurt them and to annoy them.

And he was horrible. And he did. Afterwards, he asked their forgiveness. And there was, well, there was one or two that he was never able to deal with, to be able to see that they had died.

[16:09] But it's this mentality that some people have. In the same way as they hated the Lord Jesus Christ, there are people who so hate the Christian.

And there's no rhyme or reason to it. But that's something Jesus said in the word, that people would actually think they were doing God a service by persecuting and even killing the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, in this life, as we know, we will have many sorrows and many pains and we will often be sorrowful.

Yet, the amazing thing is, at the same time, we're also filled with joy. And somebody once said that the Christian is like both the rejoicing bride and the mourning widow at the same time.

Now, you would say to yourself, that's an impossible place to be. Surely you cannot have a rejoicing bride and a mourning widow because these are really, these are extremes.

[ 17 : 16 ] They're so far apart. And yet, at a spiritual sense, that is sometimes how it is. Because we know of, I'm sure we've seen that maybe to certain degrees, some will have experienced it in a great measure.

Some maybe haven't. But I know of Christians who have gone through harrowing experiences. And their hearts, humanly, are breaking.

And yet, there is a spiritual joy within their soul that is beyond their understanding and is giving them strength. And we know that it tells us in the word that the joy of the Lord is your strength.

Now, the thing is, not every Christian who is suffering and not every Christian who's going through painful things is experiencing the Lord's joy at the same time.

And in fact, they're crying for it. They're asking for it. But sometimes the Lord gives so that at the same time, there is a sorrowing and there is the joy.

[ 18 : 27 ] Not that there's joy in the circumstances. Not that there's any joy in what you're going through. There is no joy. There cannot be. Because it's breaking your heart. The only source of joy is joy in the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

It's in him that we're able to rejoice. And when God grants us the ability to rejoice in himself, it's a wonderful thing. Because we're told that Jesus is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

And then it says, as poor yet making many rich. Now, we know that if you were to go throughout this world tonight, there are many, many, many of the Lord's people who are living in abject poverty.

There are many of the Lord's people who don't even know where their food is coming for any food for tomorrow. That is how it is in so many parts of the world with the Lord's people tonight.

And we have to remember that many of the Lord's people are poor. Some of the Lord's people are not poor. There are many rich Christians as well.

[ 19 : 38 ] But what we've got to remember here is that the poverty, whether it is material or not, the fact of the matter is that there is a poverty that belongs to every Christian that is spiritual.

That we are poor in spirit. And, you know, it's not a nice place to be, but it's an essential place to be. And the poorer we are in spirit, the worse that we feel that we're able to contribute anything to the cause of Christ.

If you tonight feel absolute poverty of spirit and you are called on to pray, you would say, oh, no, leave me out. I can't. I can't pray tonight.

I have absolutely nothing. I am so low. But, you know, sometimes that's the very place where the Lord is going to make you rich.

And he will use you to speak to other people. It's amazing. I remember the late Norman Murray, Sergeant Murray, the policeman who was so used to the Lord in this congregation and who was taken away at such a relatively young age.

[ 20 : 58 ] And he used to do quite a bit of preaching. And, of course, was very involved in the Lax still meeting. And I remember him saying to me just when I was starting out, you know, he says, I'm taking a meeting.

And I'm wondering who I'm going to call on to pray. I'm always looking out for the guy who's kind of ducking down and trying to hide behind others. Because I say to myself, oh, well, that person tonight feels he's got nothing.

He says, that's a man because he's going to be so utterly dependent upon the Lord. And there's an element of truth. That doesn't mean that that's always the way it's going to be.

But there is an element of truth in that, that it's in our sense of poverty of spirit that the Lord will often use. And it's true.

And I'm sure we've often discovered that. And we maybe try to witness and we feel we've made a mess of it. We've tried to pray and we're embarrassed about our prayer.

[ 21 : 58 ] We've tried to preach. And so often you feel that you've made an absolute mess of it. And yet later on, you find that these are the very times that God is actually blessed.

And the God who can make a feast to feed thousands out of five loaves and two fish is able to make a feast out of what you say and what you pray.

And what you witness and what you preach in whatever situation you are working for the Lord. So this is the great thing is that although there's poverty, yet there is also the riches.

And of course, the Lord is in the business of enriching our lives through his grace. We are rich with everything. Every spiritual rich, all spiritual riches have been given to us.

And then finally, just in a word there, it says us having nothing and yet possessing everything. And, you know, when you look at the Christian life, at one level, there is a level in which we have nothing.

[ 23 : 15 ] Because, you know, we've been stripped all the time. We've been stripped of self. We've been stripped of pride. We've been stripped of all the things that the world looks up to.

And all the things that the world will say, well, that's an essential. And the world will try to build up your self-esteem and will try to build up your ego and will try to build up your self-reliance and try to build up all these things.

And the Christian faith is saying, no, our reliance has to be upon God. And yet the wonderful thing is that we are possessing everything. Remember what Paul says in Colossians?

All things are yours. All things. Because the Lord has prepared for us an incredible inheritance.

There is an inheritance for us.

That is, remember how is it put that we have this inheritance which is incredible. It is incorruptible and undefiled. And that fadeth not away that is reserved in heaven for you.

[ 24 : 28 ] There's to be new heavens and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness. He says, I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again and I will take you to be with myself.

And we're told a little about what that place is going to be like. And it transcends any, anything of the splendor and the majesty and the glory and the authority and the dominion of what this world can offer.

So no person who begins to follow the Lord Jesus Christ will ever, ever lose out. And so as we look at these verses we see that at first reading it's a strange mixture.

And yet all these things are absolutely true. And by God's grace we go on to discover more and more the reality and the truth of it. Lord our God we pray then to bless us tonight.

We give thanks for our wee time together. And we pray that your word will take hold in our heart more and more. It will go down deep and it will have a transforming power for good.

[ 25 : 37 ] Watch over us and cleanse us from our sin we pray. In Jesus name we ask all. Amen. Amen. Amen.